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New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda items 20 (continued) **and 43**

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(f) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/56/681 and A/56/687)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.62)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.62.

Mr. Schumacher (Germany): I have the honour to introduce this year's draft resolution on Afghanistan under agenda items 20 (f) and 43. I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution A/56/L.62, the following countries have become sponsors: the Central African Republic, Haiti, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Latvia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Rwanda, Seychelles, Suriname, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu and Venezuela, and a vast number of additional countries have followed.

Please allow me to underline at the outset that Germany fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union that will later be presented by Belgium, which holds the current presidency of the European Union.

This is indeed a historic moment. Two days from now, the new interim authority comprising all Afghan groups will hopefully take office in Kabul. For the first time in more than a generation there is justified hope that peace will prevail and that Afghanistan will establish a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative Afghan Government, which will hopefully lead the country to a safe and prosperous future.

While the General Assembly is about to take action on draft resolution A/56/L.62, the Security Council is close to reaching agreement on the mandate of an international security force to operate in Kabul and surrounding areas.

The shock of 11 September has united the world in its efforts to combat terrorism. It has galvanized the Afghans to rid themselves of the oppressive Taliban regime, which had persistently rejected all offers from the General Assembly to engage in constructive dialogue. It is a regime which had stubbornly violated its obligation to surrender Osama bin Laden and which for too long had been providing a safe heaven for international terrorists. In the past few weeks, we have all witnessed a complete reversal of the political

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situation on the ground, the ousting of the cruel and inhumane Taliban regime, the destruction of the Al-Qaeda terrorist network in Afghanistan and the holding of the Bonn conference on the future of Afghanistan culminating in the formation of the interim authority. These are all signs that Afghanistan is finally moving in the right direction, a prospect which will be beneficial not only to the Afghans themselves but also to the entire region of South and Central Asia. This has been a joint effort of the international community and the people of Afghanistan. Operation Enduring Freedom, a courageous effort enjoying worldwide support, has become the symbol not only of the defeat of the terrorist Taliban regime, but also of the liberation of Afghanistan from oppression and terror. The worldwide support for Operation Enduring Freedom is another sign of international solidarity; the operation was the appropriate answer to the perpetrators of the horrific terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in this very city.

The Afghan people have suffered immensely over the past 20 years, and 2001 has been an exceptionally difficult year. In the past 12 months, repression by the Taliban had reached new heights. We witnessed renewed fighting and massacres, large-scale violations of human rights, discrimination against women and ethnic minorities, harassment and displacement of innocent civilians, new refugee flows and the destruction of invaluable parts of the national cultural heritage. The national economy reached a point of near collapse, a disastrous situation further aggravated by the worst drought in living memory. And let us not forget, above all, that we are still facing a major humanitarian crisis.

We are all aware that it will take enormous effort and many years, perhaps decades, to rehabilitate the socio-economic structures of Afghanistan. The political landscape has irrevocably changed. The road map towards a political settlement is now in place, but economic recovery still has to follow. Political momentum and socio-economic recovery are intertwined and need each other. We can achieve lasting stabilization of the country only if we address both aspects at the same time. Therefore, the United Nations and the international community must remain committed to Afghanistan.

This year's draft resolution, which is contained in document A/56/L.62 and which I have the honour to present today, conveys exactly that message to the Afghan people. The draft resolution is a forward-looking document. It expresses the support of the international community for the Afghan people and for their political future. It addresses urgent humanitarian issues and paves the road towards socio-economic rehabilitation and reconstruction. But the text also clearly highlights the responsibilities and contributions of the Afghans in this joint effort.

This year's negotiations took place under very, very difficult circumstances. At the same time, we experienced an extraordinarily constructive spirit during discussion of the text. The strong interest in this draft resolution is reflected also in the overwhelming number of sponsors this year. Let me wholeheartedly thank all 110 sponsors — and in particular my colleague from Luxembourg as coordinator for humanitarian draft resolutions under agenda item 20 — for their support. It is a clear sign to the Afghan people that we all continue to care about them.

Let me quickly highlight some of the major aspects of the text. The draft resolution endorses the results of the Bonn conference, namely the agreement on the formation of an interim authority and on the steps to follow. We consider the Bonn agreement to provide a historic one-time opportunity for Afghanistan. However, unless the Afghan leadership remains fully committed to the agreement and implements all its provision a lasting peace cannot be obtained. The text further endorses the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and urges the interim authorities in Kabul to cooperate closely with it. The return of Afghanistan to the international community and any lasting political solution require respect for human rights, in particular the full, equal and effective participation of women in the civil, cultural, economic, political and social life of the country. The draft resolution further strongly urges all Afghans to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Long before the tragic events of 11 September, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs tried to raise our awareness that Afghanistan was heading for another large-scale humanitarian disaster. Much has changed for the better since. The international community made impressive efforts to support those in need in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries, and the restrictions imposed by the Taliban on humanitarian operations have been removed. We are confident that a large-scale

humanitarian catastrophe can now be averted. I would in particular thank the Afghan staff of the United Nations who continued to provide assistance to vulnerable populations throughout the crisis under exceptionally difficult circumstances. More needs to be done. The draft resolution urges all States to continue to support humanitarian relief efforts financially and logistically. The interim authority is asked to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to all in need, irrespective of their gender and of their ethnic or religious background, and to ensure the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel.

Unlike the texts before the Assembly in previous years, this draft resolution for the first time goes beyond solely addressing humanitarian assistance. It calls for early rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts as an integral part of an overall political solution. This requires the close collaboration of all actors within the United Nations system and also other humanitarian organizations, the international community, Afghan authorities and Afghan civil society. The draft resolution stresses the leadership role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Lakhdar Brahimi, as overall coordinator for the development of a comprehensive strategy covering all aspects of humanitarian assistance, early recovery and reconstruction.

For many years, Germany has shown a special commitment to Afghanistan, bilaterally as well as within the United Nations. We traditionally introduce the General Assembly draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. We also introduced resolution 55/243 a few months ago on the despicable act of destruction of the Buddha statues in Bamiyan earlier this year.

My country is still chairing the Afghan Support Group. We are also prepared to join an international force in sending troops to Afghanistan. Through the European Union's special envoy for Afghanistan, Mr. Klaus-Peter Klaiber, Germany and its European partners are engaging in sustainable reconstruction efforts. These efforts are made on the understanding that the international community must help the Afghan people find their way to a stable, peaceful and unified State.

Many interested States and groups have contributed, and are still contributing, to these goals. Their contributions are very welcome, but I would like to stress once again the pivotal role of the United Nations in this context. The United Nations is, and will remain, the legitimate body to help and support our Afghan friends in rebuilding their society, their economy and their country. So far, it has carried out its tasks admirably. I wish to thank the Secretary-General; his Special Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi; the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell; and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Kenzo Oshima, and their teams, for their tireless efforts in this context. Germany will continue to consistently support United Nations efforts in this area with all the means at its disposal. We want to see a peaceful and free Afghanistan that will play its part in ensuring the region's long-term stability.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): I am pleased to see you, Sir, preside over a meeting on Afghanistan at this historic time. I am thankful to the Government of Germany for having hosted the Bonn meeting, which brought about so many changes in Afghanistan.

I should also like to thank Ambassador Kastrup and his colleagues, who worked on drafting parts A and B of the draft resolution that has been submitted. I am grateful also to Mr. Hanns Schumacher for his very thought-provoking and interesting introduction of the text. I shall not reiterate many of the points Mr. Schumacher touched on in his statement.

Security and stability must be restored in Afghanistan, through both short- and medium-term humanitarian efforts. Without conditions of security, food will not get to where it is most needed. It has already been announced that this winter will be a rather cold one in Afghanistan, and very soon the mountainous part of the country will be covered in snow. The snow in winter and the rain in March and April are very much needed in Afghanistan for irrigation. For more than three years, atmospheric precipitation was scarce in Afghanistan, and the Taliban regime failed to do anything about the very severe drought.

As a result of 23 years of armed conflict, roads and irrigation and power systems have been severely damaged. The Taliban closed all girls' schools and failed to establish an educational system for the boys. The Taliban's discrimination against women and their lack of interest in humanitarian affairs destroyed the health-care system. There are 7 million Afghan refugees, including internally displaced persons, many

of them in Pakistan and Iran. The onset of winter will greatly hinder their immediate repatriation. Indeed, in all cases of repatriation the climate has to be taken into consideration.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has expressed concern that one out of three children in Afghanistan — that is, 400,000 annually — will die before the age of 5. Furthermore, as the Assembly is aware, Afghanistan is the most heavily mined country in the world. Uexploded ordnance is also left over from past conflicts and from recent air attacks. Mine-clearance action is vital to Afghanistan and must be expanded. This is required for the safety of the population, especially the children; for the necessary revitalization of agriculture; for the repatriation of refugees; and especially now, for emergency food delivery.

The United Nations mine action programme had planned to spend $30 million to demine the country over a 12-year period. However, there is now a need for quicker action in clearing unexploded ordnance. The United Nations has appealed for $34 million for the next six months. These funds are needed immediately.

Here in the General Assembly, a resolution was adopted yesterday by consensus on the report of the Third Committee on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has estimated that United Nations agencies will need a total of $662 million to meet Afghanistan's vital needs through 31 March. So far, only $35 million have been committed by 15 donor countries and other donors are therefore solicited to contribute.

A basic effort of coordination is required. The United Nations is performing a major job in assisting the interim administration on the humanitarian and reconstruction fronts. These efforts will have implications for the projected United Nations budget, which is relatively very modest. Fortunately, significant bilateral aid is being planned by the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Italy and many other donor countries. These States may agree on the appointment of a general coordinator who will cooperate with the Afghan authorities.

We hope that the Tokyo meeting in January 2002, with the participation of donor Governments and of organizations providing aid to Afghanistan, will prepare the ground for both the urgently needed humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and for setting priorities in the field of reconstruction and revitalization.

I should like to express all the appreciation of the Afghan authorities for the job performed in many stages by Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi with great efficiency and by Francisc Vendrell and their colleagues, who had to spend sleepless nights, especially at the Bonn meeting. That will always be appreciated always by the Afghans.

Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium) (spoke in French): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European associated with the Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as Iceland, associate themselves with this statement.

Because of recent events, Afghanistan continues to face three major challenges to which the European Union referred from this very rostrum last year: putting an end to the fighting that is destabilizing the country and the entire region; re-establishing respect for human rights, including equal rights for men and women; and seeking a political solution to the conflict.

The challenges remain, but the targeted military operations that began on 7 October, aimed at eliminating the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, and their outcome on the ground have presented the Afghan people with an opportunity to break the deadlock. At this crucial hour for the future of that country and for regional stability, the international community is ready to help the Afghans to seize this opportunity.

The signing in Bonn on 5 December of the agreement on provisional arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of permanent Government institutions was an important first step in the right direction. Indeed, it represents a first phase towards the establishment of a broad-based, multiethnic and fully representative Government concerned with the equality of the sexes and with improving the lot of women. The Union fully supports these arrangements and calls on all Afghan groups to implement them in a comprehensive manner. In that context, it should be pointed out that any political settlement in Afghanistan must be based on the will of the Afghans.

The European Union also reiterates its firm support for the United Nations and, in particular, for the mission of Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi.

The European Council, which met in Laeken on 14 and 15 December, committed itself to participating in the international community's efforts to restore stability in Afghanistan on the basis of the outcome of the Bonn conference and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. In that regard, it urged the deployment of an international security force mandated with contributing to the security of Afghan and international administrations in Kabul and surrounding areas. The Security Council should also encourage Member States participating in that force to support the interim Afghan authority in the creation and training of new Afghan armed and security forces.

However, the positive developments in the political situation must not overshadow the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. It is alarming and may deteriorate further during the winter. Given the urgent needs of the Afghan people, humanitarian assistance is an absolute priority. The distribution of assistance, particularly to refugees and displaced persons, will have to adjust to changing circumstances and be undertaken in the most effective and coordinated way possible. It must not be left to chance. In that respect, the European Union remains concerned by the insecure conditions in which the representatives of humanitarian and non-governmental organizations are living in Afghanistan and stresses the importance of facilitating the distribution of humanitarian assistance.

The European Union supports the efforts of the United Nations specialized agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and all humanitarian agencies to find practical and flexible solutions. For its part, the European Union and its States members have already committed or are prepared to commit €352 for humanitarian assistance, €102 of which will be drawn from the community budget.

A post-conflict settlement remains an enormous challenge. More than 20 years of war and political instability have destroyed the structures of Afghan society, completely disrupted the functioning of institutions and public services and brought immense human suffering. The European Union will help the Afghan people and their new leaders to rebuild the country and to promote the speediest possible return of democracy. In order to bolster its efforts, the European Union has appointed Mr. Klaus-Peter Klaiber as its Special Representative for Afghanistan.

Particular attention must be paid to the establishment of institutions and mechanisms to protect human rights and to promote the situation of women in Afghanistan. The team of the European Union's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Mr. Klaiber, will include an official entrusted with ensuring the effective exercise of their rights by the women of Afghanistan and act as the Union's interlocutor for Afghan women.

Dynamic cooperation and international coordination will be necessary to rehabilitation and reconstruction. In that regard, the Afghanistan Support Group is playing an important role in closing the gaps between humanitarian assistance and the immediate needs and reconstruction of Afghanistan. This effort will need to be complemented by equally effective coordination on the ground. Finally, the most decisive element of all in the reconstruction effort will be the respect of all Afghan groups for their political commitments.

For his part, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General will play a crucial role as coordinator in the development and implementation of a strategy that should make it possible to move smoothly from the phase of humanitarian assistance to that of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The European Union would like to emphasize the importance of launching now a plan of economic and institutional reconstruction for Afghanistan. It is essential that the political process be accompanied by economic aid. The fight against anti-personnel mines, the cultivation of drug-producing plants and drug trafficking are elements to take into account. The challenge is thus great and manifold.

At the initiative of the Presidency and the European Commission, the European Union is co-chairing, today and tomorrow in Brussels, the first meeting of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Steering Group. This meeting aims to develop concrete and lasting coordination arrangements with regard to the assessment of needs and the identification, implementation and follow-up to assistance measures. The meeting should also make it possible to fine-tune the mechanism for channelling financial assistance. Finally, it will provide support for political renewal in

Afghanistan and ensure better coordination of the donors' efforts with a view to preparing for the ministerial conference to be held in Tokyo in January 2002. At these meetings, the European Union pledges to help cover the needs that are identified, along with the United States, the Arab States and Japan.

The situation has changed enormously, and our energy, assistance and support are necessary today to support the Afghan people in determining their future of peace and stability. We believe that this effort is translated constructively into the draft resolution that is before us today. It reflects both the political and humanitarian aspects of the current situation.

I would like to conclude by warmly congratulating Germany on drawing up this excellent draft resolution. In addition to its practical perspectives, it contains a message of support that is indispensable for the Afghan population. The other members of the European Union have been eager to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation notes with appreciation the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan. We share his optimism that an acceptable settlement is within reach, provided the Afghan leaders navigate the difficult political terrain ahead in a constructive spirit and with a genuine willingness to compromise for the greater good of the people.

While terrorism triggered the current military intervention in Afghanistan, the international community must confront a wide array of challenges in the effort to restore long-term stability to the country. It is our fervent hope that Afghanistan will not be abandoned once the immediate military and security objectives of the American-led international coalition have been achieved. Learning from the lessons of the past, we should make every effort to ensure that Afghanistan will not be left as a failed State to be ruled by various warlords, providing a fertile breeding ground for the kind of terrorism that shook the world on 11 September.

Rebuilding the country will require a massive commitment of resources and long-term, sustained attention from the international community. In an unprecedented development, we now have an incoming interim Government that has the backing not only of the developed world but also of its neighbours, all of which have an enormous interest in Afghanistan's stability. As the interim Government takes office on 22 December, it will do so with a deep sense of the good will and political support of the international community as well as good prospects for massive international assistance for the reconstruction of the war-devastated country.

The recently concluded Bonn Agreement, reflecting a political consensus by Afghan parties, an unprecedented move, is a step in the right direction. Malaysia wholeheartedly welcomes this development and hopes that it will provide the necessary basis on which to build a strong and viable Government in Afghanistan. Much credit is due to Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi and his team for their untiring efforts and excellent negotiating skills in facilitating this landmark achievement in Afghan history. We also express our appreciation to all members of the international community that contributed to the Afghan political process, including the Government of Germany for its own efforts and for hosting the historic conference in Bonn that resulted in the breakthrough that we all laud.

We are at a defining moment in Afghanistan's history. At this critical juncture, what we members of the international community decide in the coming days and weeks with regard to Afghanistan will have far-reaching repercussions for that country. The United Nations Development Programme's warning against "quick fixes" and donor fatigue should, therefore, be taken to heart. A "Marshall Plan" for the country, to facilitate the establishment of special institutions and resources over a considerable period of time, must be considered as representing a serious effort to rehabilitate the war-ravaged country.

Malaysia looks forward to the rapid restoration of all of the institutions of Afghanistan and to its transformation, with international assistance, from a country devastated by long years of war to a modern, democratic Islamic country that enjoys all the attributes of a strong and viable nation-State, a proud and fully functioning member of the international community. We look forward to playing a constructive role in contributing to that process.

However, reconstruction must not be confined to the physical rehabilitation of a devastated infrastructure or to ensuring an economically viable State. The world must seize the opportunity to re-engineer the socio-economic foundations of

Afghanistan and to help its people break away from the tragic modes of behaviour and patterns of its unhappy past, of which the culture of "warlordism" was and continues to be a characteristic feature.

While the creation of a stable, broad-based representative Government remains the political end game, every effort must be made to address the grievances of ethnic groups that feel that they have been economically, politically and culturally sidelined. Pursuing ethnocentric policies serves only to promote the narrow interests of the warlords and tribal chieftains, making the tasks of nation-building all the more difficult. Reconciliation and social integration policies should be pursued aggressively. For far too long, the interests of ordinary Afghans have been forsaken. The United Nations, with its people-centred orientation, should play an important role in this process.

Fault lines in the new Government are apparent, rooted in the country's bitter ethnic divisions and its culture of "warlordism". Maintaining the Bonn consensus will therefore be a monumental challenge. Undeniably, however, Afghanistan's future is brighter today than it was a few weeks ago. The United Nations and the international community must strengthen their resolve to help Afghanistan meet these challenges head-on and continue to push and cajole the often quarrelsome Afghan parties to remain true to the Bonn spirit.

It remains for the various Afghan leaders to focus their energies on promoting the interests of ordinary Afghans. The ball is squarely in their court. The Secretary-General puts it succinctly in his message to the Afghan leaders gathering in Bonn at the start of the talks:

> "you, who are taking this responsibility, must show unprecedented courage and leadership. You must place the interests of your people first, above all other concerns. Only then will this process — this attempt to break the cycle of misery and destitution, conflict and violence — stand a chance of success." (SG/SM/*8045*)

On the subject of an international security force, my delegation supports the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force as a matter of principle, and we would give favourable consideration to participation within that framework. We note Ambassador Brahimi's justifications for an urgent deployment of a multinational security force in support of the political process. However, now that we have a political settlement in place, immediate work should begin to operationalize a peacekeeping force on the ground in support of the existing political settlement agreed among willing parties. This force should be ready to assume responsibility and take over from the multinational force as soon as practically possible.

Afghan leaders took a promising step towards a stable post-Taliban Government at the meeting in Bonn on 5 December 2001 — an extraordinary event, bringing together representatives of ethnic groups that, historically, have not been able to cooperate. The transition from the Interim Administration to the Transitional Authority will be a trying period if Afghan leaders fail to manifest the requisite political will to sustain the Bonn spirit. There is certainly no lack of resolve on the part of the international community to promote peace, bring humanitarian relief to the desperate Afghans and facilitate reconstruction.

In contemplating their future, our Afghan brothers might find it worthwhile to ponder the following quotation:

> "The greatest thought is God; the greatest thing is love; the greatest mystery is death; the greatest challenge is life; the greatest waste of time is hate; and the most expensive indulgence is pride."

We hope and pray that the new year, and the years that follow, will bring peace and tranquillity to brotherly Afghanistan.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on Afghanistan. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his two separate reports.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September brought about a fundamental change in our security environment, galvanizing the whole world to fight against terrorism with unprecedented unity. At the same time, this global war on terrorism has provided the people of Afghanistan, as well as the United Nations, with a golden opportunity to end the decades-long devastating conflict and rebuild the Afghan nation.

At this juncture, the tasks to be undertaken by the United Nations in Afghanistan are very daunting and multifaceted, encompassing political, military, humanitarian, human rights and economic dimensions. My delegation greatly appreciates the fast and efficient measures taken by the Secretary-General, and his leadership in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. We would also like to pay special tribute to Mr. Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his exemplary peacemaking efforts, which led all the Afghan parties to a historic political agreement.

The Republic of Korea is committed to doing its utmost to help Afghanistan through these tumultuous times. I would like to take this opportunity to comment on a few issues that my delegation finds particularly critical.

First, regarding the political future of Afghanistan, we congratulate all the Afghan parties that came together and agreed on a detailed political process. We sincerely hope that all Afghan people, in the spirit of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups and generations, will fully implement the agreement, with the goal of the eventual establishment of a legitimate Government and Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community. During this process, the international community, in particular neighbouring and other interested countries, should extend their full support to Afghanistan, which has been neglected for years. We should all refrain from pursuing any narrow national interests while helping the Afghans in the restoration of their right to peace and stability. The Republic of Korea truly welcomes the launch of the Afghan Interim Authority and wishes to establish a friendly and cooperative relationship with Afghanistan.

Secondly, my delegation would like, in this connection, to point out the importance of maintaining peace and security throughout the extensive territory of Afghanistan. We appreciate the Security Council's continuing attention to and debate on this issue, including its preparations for authorizing the dispatch of international security assistance forces to designated areas of Afghanistan.

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September, the Republic of Korea has been consulting closely with other States with a view to participating in the international coalition to fight terrorism in Afghanistan, including through the possible dispatch of medical and transportation support units.

My third point relates to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan — currently the most urgent and critical issue to be addressed by the international community. The dire situation of millions of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons has rapidly deteriorated in recent months. We greatly appreciate the emergency relief efforts of all the humanitarian organizations and their workers, and we earnestly request the Afghan people to ensure the safety and free movement of humanitarian personnel when they enter the country.

The Republic of Korea is in the process of implementing its pledged contribution of emergency humanitarian and economic assistance, worth $12 million in kind and in cash, to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, in response to the emergency appeal of the Secretary-General in October. We are willing to continue discussing further ways and means of rendering assistance in consultation with other actors in various international forums.

Finally, my delegation welcomes the ongoing discussion among Member States and related organizations on long-term assistance for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. In the light of Afghanistan's large territory and population and of its dire socio-economic situation, this will undoubtedly be a very daunting and complicated task. We hope that a practical and workable master plan, as well as a well-coordinated division of work among those involved in that plan, can be worked out.

The Republic of Korea is actively participating in meetings for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan, and will continue to do so, and it is very willing to play a constructive role in this endeavour.

The day after tomorrow — 22 December — is a historic day for all the Afghan people, stricken by decades of war and conflict. We hope that, with the launch of the Interim Authority, they will be able to put their tragic history behind them and begin a new era of freedom, prosperity and respect for human dignity. The United Nations, respecting their sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination, should play a central role in helping them rebuild a democratic Government and a free society in which human rights are once again upheld.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to emphasize the important role to be played by women, as primary caregivers and key actors for positive change in building a culture of peace in Afghanistan.

In this regard, my delegation fully supports the draft resolution on Afghanistan, which we have co-sponsored, and reaffirms the Republic of Korea's firm commitment to a new Afghanistan.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): First of all, I would like to commend United Nations Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi and his colleagues on their important contribution to the agreement reached between the four Afghan groups in Bonn earlier this month. The Afghan representatives have shown great courage and leadership.

Norway warmly welcomes the agreement and is pleased to note the Afghan groups' cooperation and readiness to find common ground for an interim administration. The Bonn agreement will be crucial to the efforts to reach a lasting peace in Afghanistan. It is now of great importance that the agreement is implemented, and is respected, by all Afghan parties.

To strengthen the political process it is vital that the international community commit itself to assisting the Afghan people at this crucial time. Norway will continue to lend political support to Mr. Brahimi and to provide financial support to the interim administration in Kabul. It is vital that the interim administration be in a position to function as a governing body as soon as possible. Only then can Afghan ownership of the development process be achieved.

I think it is fair to say that the international community has high hopes that the Afghans and their representatives will live up to their part of this historic undertaking. We expect, first and foremost, that conflicts will be solved and challenges met through peaceful and democratic means. We also expect substantial progress in the field of human rights, in particular with regard to the rights of women and children. To a large degree the legitimacy of the new Afghan authorities will depend on their ability to guarantee the basic human rights of their people. Norway welcomes the efforts for active participation by women in the political process. True representative government in Afghanistan can be achieved only when women are fully included.

Norway will be chairing the Afghanistan Support Group in 2002. The basic objective of this informal group of donors is to contribute to reconciliation and social and economic development, and thus to sustainable peace and progress, in Afghanistan. The enormous humanitarian and reconstruction needs have to be addressed without delay, and the international commitment must have a long-term perspective. The Afghan Support Group will focus on improving donor coordination with respect to the various international efforts and on ensuring that human rights considerations are taken into account when providing aid.

Immediate attention must be paid to areas such as education, food security, mine action and repatriation and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons. We want to promote a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent approach that will facilitate the transition to longer-term reconstruction and development. Sufficient resources must be provided for humanitarian response and long-term development activities in order to lay the foundation on which a strong nation can be built.

The changes in the political situation have made the transport of food and other relief items into Afghanistan easier. However, the security situation within the country remains a major obstacle to the distribution of humanitarian goods to those who are most in need. High priority must now be given to the protection of civilians and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

The challenge posed by landmines is a formidable one, but we have made some progress. Afghanistan already has the world's largest demining programme. For reconstruction and resettlement to take place, that effort will need to be further scaled up.

One of the key elements in planning for reconstruction is to avoid the duplication of efforts. It is of the utmost importance to avoid having different agencies trying to drag the process in different directions. Coordination is the key if we are to succeed in giving effective support to the efforts of the Afghan people. There must be a close and continuous connection between humanitarian assistance and reconstruction, so that they form a joint and complementary effort. Recovery and reconstruction must be carried out in tandem with further progress in the political process in Afghanistan.

In connection with international assistance to rebuilding the country, the appalling human rights situation must be improved. Particular attention will have to be paid to restoring women's access to social services and their full participation in productive and economic activities. Women have been effectively excluded from participation in the country's economic, social and political life. This constitutes a violation of human rights. Besides, children have suffered intolerable violations of their basic rights and have had only limited access to health care, education and food. To make up for the misery they have been through, Afghan children should be at the centre of our efforts. In this connection education, particularly for girls, is one of the best investments we can make for the future of Afghanistan. The sooner we invest, the sooner that Afghanistan will benefit from the returns.

In our further planning we need to ensure that our statements about Afghans being in the driver's seat become a reality. We must avoid a massive inflow of people and equipment before we know what we and the Afghans want to achieve, and how. International humanitarian and reconstruction actors should be evaluated on the basis of the long-term impact of what they do, not by who puts up the flag first. We need to build on the capacities of the many local communities that have already established programmes and projects in sectors like education, health, water and sanitation. If we build on the decentralized nature of Afghan society, we will probably have a quicker and more positive impact. In this regard we must make use of the capacities and networks of non-governmental organizations. This will also help to strengthen Afghan civil society. Local authorities are likely to be a more efficient approach to reflect local needs. Working with them is in keeping with Afghan traditions.

The Afghan tragedy has had a formidable impact on neighbouring countries. The influx of displaced persons across the borders has put an unprecedented strain on the societies concerned. Thus all our activities need to have a regional dimension. All steps should be taken in close consultation with Afghanistan's neighbouring countries.

Breaking the vicious circle of war and misery in Afghanistan is long overdue. The Afghans themselves, particularly the women, from all regions and ethnic groups, should be involved in the whole process of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. The future of Afghanistan must be placed firmly in the hands of the Afghan people. The reconstruction of Afghanistan after 20 years of violent conflict and natural disasters is clearly too large a task to be financed by the small group of traditional donors alone. It is now essential that the international community commit itself to assisting, both politically and financially.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, allow me to express my thanks to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report he has presented on the various aspects of the situation in Afghanistan. I wish also to thank him for his personal commitment to Afghanistan and for his decision to revive the mission of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, which facilitated the successful conclusion of the Bonn conference. There is no doubt that the role that Mr. Brahimi; his Deputy, Mr. Vendrell; and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) are playing is of great importance in bringing about a lasting political settlement to the Afghan crisis. I reiterate the full readiness of my Government to extend to them all possible support and assistance in their difficult task.

We are pleased to note that, in contrast to the gloomy ambiance that dominated our last debate on Afghanistan in the General Assembly, a great deal of hope and optimism prevails in our debate this year. Now, after more than two decades, there is a realistic prospect for the establishment of a broad-based, representative and multi-ethnic government in factious and war-stricken Afghanistan. In two days, on the basis of the Bonn agreement, which is more or less endorsed by all Afghan parties, an interim authority is to take office in the Afghan national capital — a development whose importance should not be underestimated.

We are happy that there is now a real hope of laying the groundwork necessary to enable the Afghans to leave behind the extreme suffering they have gone through for decades. For my Government, whose interests are best served by the restoration of peace and tranquillity in Afghanistan, this development is a cause for extreme pleasure and delight. We are hopeful that the new environment will lead to a complete halt in the production of and trafficking in drugs, an end to the harbouring of terrorists and extremists on Afghan soil, and the resolution of refugee problems, thereby helping to create stability, which long has been elusive, in Afghanistan and in the region.

The Afghans have now embarked on the relatively lengthy and complex process of reviving unity among Afghan ethnic groups, which is a sine qua non for the Afghan nation and its territorial integrity. Lack of ethnic unity shattered peace and brought about disaster for the Afghan people. The interim authority, which is to lay the groundwork for the convening of emergency as well as constitutional loya jirgas and for the holding of free and fair elections, represents the best hope for reviving Afghan ethnic unity and bringing about peace and normalcy in Afghanistan.

However, there is no room for complacency. The situation in Afghanistan is still precarious and far from stable. The Taliban leaders who are still at large constitute a danger for the nascent Afghan Government. A press conference organized by some Taliban members outside Afghan territory last week indicates, among other things, that at least some elements of the defunct Taliban leadership are intent on playing a disruptive role in future. We believe that they should not be allowed to do so and that any new malicious effort should be nipped in the bud.

The fact that some suspicion and bitterness has developed among certain Afghan leaders in the course of the extended war is another cause for concern. However, we are confident that, in the new environment, all Afghans will rise above sectarian disputes, and that the national interests of Afghanistan and the quest to ensure the well-being of the Afghan people will transcend rivalries and non-essential issues. In this regard, what has followed the collapse of the Taliban is, rather, a cause for hope and optimism. We hope that the Afghan groups will continue to refrain from unlawful acts of reprisal and that amity among groups will take root.

The reconstruction of Afghanistan and the rehabilitation of the country's infrastructure are a must, failing which return to peace and normalcy will remain elusive. Any progress in this field will require sustained international commitment in the years to come. There is no doubt that a generous investment by the international community in rebuilding Afghanistan today will pay off in the form of sparing the region and the entire world from the re-emergence of that country as a source of instability tomorrow. In our view, there is a need to draft a framework for the reconstruction of Afghanistan as soon as possible. We believe that rebuilding the Afghan educational system, encouraging the Afghans to take an active part in the political decision-making process, developing a poppy-substitution programme and funding the return of refugees should figure prominently among the priority tasks during the reconstruction period. We strongly encourage the continuation and intensification of the food-for-education programme, especially for girls. This achieves two goals at once: it helps to feed malnourished Afghan children and, at the same time, provides food incentives to increase student enrolment and attendance. Moreover, we also would like to encourage countries and cities worldwide each to sponsor education in one Afghan province or city.

My country, which has experience in dealing with Afghans and is privileged to share a common language with them, stands ready to help in every possible field to further the objective of the reconstruction process in Afghanistan.

During the years of war and distress in Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been on the side of the Afghan people. We have hosted on our soil for over two decades more than two million Afghan refugees. We have not attempted to confine them in camps. They have had the opportunity to blend in with Iranian society and to work. Despite the large number of refugees we are hosting, we have received minimal international assistance. The combination of these factors, coupled with domestic economic constraints in recent years, has increased the adverse impact of the refugee problem on Iranian society. However, we continue to be fully committed to our moral and legal obligations arising from the historical friendship between the Iranian and Afghan peoples and to the international instruments governing refugee issues. In this context, we expect that the international community also will remain committed to its obligations by providing sufficient assistance to the refugees in Iran, including the necessary funds for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees, in the framework of the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

I would recall also that my Government, aware of the evil nature of the Taliban leaders, never allowed itself to embark on the path of appeasing them. To the contrary, we spared no effort in assisting the Afghan resistance against the Taliban. We are pleased that our visionary approach paid off in the end and that the United Front, which led the Afghan resistance, played a pivotal and instrumental role in cleansing the Afghan soil of the Taliban leadership.

The Islamic Republic of Iran expects that its concerns will be taken into account in the new era that will follow the collapse of the Taliban. We expect that the new Afghan leaders, with whom we have had a long history of friendship and cooperation, will do their best to uproot poppy cultivation and related activities in their homeland. They are fully aware of the enormous damage we have sustained as a result of drug-trafficking stemming from Afghan territory. We are also fully aware that the situation in the former poppy-growing areas is alarming and stand ready to help and encourage the international community to help in this regard.

Despite the end of war and the collapse of the Taliban, as many as 6 million Afghan people are on the brink of starvation as a result of a generation of war, three years of drought and, more importantly, the policy the Taliban pursued in the last five years. Recent heavy bombing of Afghan territory exacerbated the situation. Therefore, as a first priority, there is an absolutely desperate need to get food to most parts of Afghanistan this winter, especially the Central Highlands; otherwise, the current food crisis may worsen, turn into a refugee crisis and result in the loss of lives and a further influx of refugees into neighbouring countries. To facilitate the provision of assistance to Afghanistan, my Government has taken every possible measure in the border areas and my country is fully prepared to serve as a conduit of food and other basic necessities into that country.

More than three years ago, the Taliban, on its march to militarily control Afghan territory, broke into the Iranian consulate general in Mazar-e-Sharif and cold-bloodedly murdered Iranian diplomats and one journalist. What they did then was the harbinger of what they had in the pipeline for all those whose only fault was being different from them. We believe that those who committed this crime and so many other crimes, including the massacre of people from the Hazara ethnic group in the Afghan Central Highlands, should be held accountable and brought to justice. We fully agree with the Secretary-General when he states in his report that

> "Sustainable peace ... cannot be built on a foundation of impunity. Hence, the Afghan people and their international partners must commit themselves to addressing the problems of the past by ending impunity and ensuring accountability for past abuses." (*A/56/681, para. 83*)

We are pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/55/L.62, which highlights the international community's commitment to helping the Afghans rebuild their country. I would also like to place on record our appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Germany and his colleagues for the excellent and professional work they did in carrying out the negotiations and consultations on this draft resolution.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): Once again, we are deliberating an issue which has been a challenge to the international community for decades. It also represents one of those cases in contemporary history in which a poor and dispossessed nation, which had sacrificed so much for the cause of the free world, was treated in turn by the international community with callous indifference and punitiveness. One does not have to dilate upon history, but history would have been different if Afghanistan, at the end of the cold war, had not been left in chaos and conflict to be exploited by the evil forces of violence and hatred.

For years, Afghanistan has been the subject of debates and resolutions at the United Nations, aggravating — not alleviating — the suffering of the people of that war-ravaged country. Their isolation and ostracization drove them to despair and disillusionment and into the hands of Al-Qaeda, a group of non-Afghan runaway dissidents from their own countries who could not find a better hiding place than the shadows of Afghanistan's wilderness and rugged mountains. If the world had remained constructively engaged with the people of Afghanistan and had not turned its back on them, the situation today might have been totally different. Osama bin Laden and his associates would not have exploited Afghanistan or taken advantage of the Afghan traditions of hospitality and friendship, abusing their trust to spread terror across the globe.

For 22 long years, the people of Afghanistan have suffered — and suffered terribly — at the hands of both man and nature. They have been victims of brutal foreign occupation, self-serving exploitation by the free world, a fratricidal civil war, the ruthlessness of power-hungry and bloodsucking warlords and the excesses of oppressive and obscurantist regimes. The United Nations also allowed itself to be used as a tool to punish the Afghans for sins they never committed.

The devastating drought which has afflicted them over the past several years has only aggravated their already severe plight.

Countless Afghans have lost their lives through these difficult and turbulent years. Today, over 6 million Afghans are sheltered as refugees in neighbouring countries and millions more are either internally displaced or face tremendous hardship in their own localities. Rather than receiving the help it deserved as being the last great battlefield of the cold war, Afghanistan was totally isolated and reduced to a wasteland that attracted fugitives and criminals from all over the world.

Today, however, is not the time for remorse or rhetoric or for remaining frozen in the past. These are unusual times, demanding a fresh approach and new thinking in our response to one of the gravest challenges to humanity. As we review the situation in Afghanistan, we must be guided by the need to rectify the mistakes of the past. Nothing is more important in the context of today's agenda item than the urgency of durable peace and stability in Afghanistan and its relevance to the peace and stability of the world at large.

We must also take cognizance of the seriousness of the humanitarian situation in that country, which warrants a corresponding global response in rehabilitation and reconstruction. Now that the international community is fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, we hope it will not walk away from the country once the immediate objectives of the military campaign have been achieved. A country ravaged by war has to be rebuilt. A society torn by conflict has to be healed. All this requires commitment and perseverance. The long-term solution to the problem of terrorism in Afghanistan lies in the restoration of peace and stability and the reconstruction of the country. An Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours is the surest safeguard against any future terrorist activity emanating from within its borders.

Indeed, the Afghans are not the only victims of the Afghan tragedy. Pakistan has suffered also. For almost two and a half decades, we have been providing shelter to over 3 million Afghans through our own meagre resources and without any appreciable assistance from the outside world. Our economy has been suffering, and continues to suffer, because of the situation in Afghanistan. Rampant terrorism, as well as the culture of drugs and guns that we call the "Kalashnikov culture", tearing apart our social and political fibre, is also a direct legacy of the protracted conflict in Afghanistan. With this bleak scenario, no country in the world has suffered more than Pakistan from the conflict in Afghanistan, and no country could have a greater stake than Pakistan in the return of peace and stability to Afghanistan.

Pakistan fully supports the efforts of the United Nations to bring peace to Afghanistan. We therefore appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General and those of his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi. We fully support Ambassador Brahimi's mandate to facilitate the restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan, as well as to assist in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of that war-ravaged country. We hope the United Nations will continue to play its role as a facilitator in helping the Afghans find home-grown solutions to their problems and to bring their country back into the comity of nations as a responsible and law-abiding State.

Here I must also express our profound appreciation to the Government of Germany for hosting the historic Bonn Conference among the Afghan leaders, which resulted in the landmark Bonn Agreement.

Pakistan welcomes the swearing-in of Mr. Hamid Karzai, in two days' time in Kabul, as the head of the Interim Administration. We shall extend our full support and cooperation not only to the Interim Administration and all its members, but also to the subsequent Governments of Afghanistan, transitional or otherwise, in their efforts to restore peace and stability to Afghanistan.

Pakistan remains fully committed to maintaining fraternal ties with Afghanistan and would be ready to assist, as it has always been, in Afghanistan's rehabilitation and reconstruction. To this end, the President of Pakistan proposed addressing the Assembly last month regarding the establishment of an "Afghan trust fund", under United Nations auspices, to assist in humanitarian relief as well as national reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in Afghanistan.

Pakistan considers the Bonn Agreement an important positive development, in that it seeks to bring about a fundamental change in Afghanistan through peaceful means and in a spirit of mutual accommodation among the Afghans. The Agreement,

in spite of its shortcomings, is a first step towards developing a genuinely home-grown, broad-based and multi-ethnic political dispensation in Afghanistan through the convening, in due course, of a Loya Jirga. We hope that this process will lead to the establishment of a genuinely representative Government in Afghanistan that is acceptable to all Afghans, promotes unity and stability and respects its international obligations, including its obligations to its neighbours. Any attempt motivated by intrinsic animosities or rivalries from inside or sponsored by vested interests from outside to pit this landlocked country against any of its neighbours will only prolong the misery and deprivation of its people, delaying its socio-economic and political recovery and keeping the region mired in instability.

The international community, on its part, has to ensure its full support for the United Nations as the Organization oversees the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. This includes ensuring the early deployment, as stipulated in the Agreement, of a United Nations-mandated force for the maintenance of security in Kabul as well as other areas of the country. Efforts are needed to accelerate the deployment of this force and secure the demilitarization of Kabul and other major urban centres where it is expected to take up positions. The international community must also ensure that the "warlordism" that once wreaked havoc across Afghanistan is not given a chance to obstruct the establishment of a stable political dispensation in Afghanistan.

We hope all Afghan factions and groups will avail themselves of this unique opportunity to extricate their country from the abyss in which it has remained for the last two decades. The success of the Bonn Agreement will depend on how the Afghan leaders acquit themselves in rebuilding their country through a mutual spirit of accommodation. The tribal and ethnic structures will remain of special relevance in any future set-up, and in the larger measure, it is up to the Afghans themselves to make or mar the future of their country.

The two-decade-long conflict in Afghanistan has taken the country back to the eighteenth century, if not farther. The country lacks a basic infrastructure as its people remain deprived of their basic necessities. Once peace returns to Afghanistan, humanitarian relief has to be sustained. No peace process can work without commensurate support to rebuild and rehabilitate this war-ravaged country. Therefore, it is equally important to develop concurrently a comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation plan, which will be put in place as soon as peace returns to Afghanistan.

It is imperative for the international community to immediately begin work on this plan and arrange the necessary finances to support and sustain it. Any reconstruction effort in Afghanistan must initially entail, at the minimum, the restoration of water-management systems, the revival of agriculture, the reconstruction of infrastructure and transit routes and the rebuilding of institutions, as well as continued humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people, particularly internally and externally displaced persons.

It is needless to emphasize that this time the international community must not walk away from Afghanistan, as it has done in the past. It must demonstrate the political will and the determination to engage and help the Afghan people in rebuilding peace and the economy of their country. The Afghans have been disillusioned by the treatment they have received from the world community in the past. The negative consequences of that neglect are clear for everyone to see. That mistake must not be repeated.

We are turning over a new leaf in Afghanistan. Let this augur well for its people and for the world community. Pakistan, like the rest of the world community, hopes that this new era will bring positive change in Afghanistan. It is thus with hope and commitment that we are cosponsoring the draft resolution before the Assembly. We fully subscribe to its intent to restore peace and normalcy in Afghanistan, as well as to promote relief and reconstruction work there. We hope that the draft resolution will strengthen United Nations efforts in Afghanistan and truly contribute to the achievement of peace, security and development in that country, which needs it so badly.

As we open a new chapter in the Afghan saga, the bitter and unpleasant chapters of the past must be closed. We must look forward, not backward. The United Nations sanctions imposed under Security Council resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1333 (2000) represent a painful legacy for the Afghan people. Now that the Taliban have been eliminated, the sanctions regime, which hurts only the people of Afghanistan, must also come to an end. We now have Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which has wider scope and reach and has made the Taliban-specific

resolutions — 1267 (1999) and 1333 (2000) — redundant. Once the current military campaign in Afghanistan has been succeeded, all the resources that were mobilized for intrusive and punitive mechanisms under those resolutions should be placed at the disposal of Ambassador Brahimi so that he can use them, if he so requires, appropriately and constructively, to rebuild Afghanistan. Tomorrow's Afghanistan will involve the United Nations, not as a policeman hunting for criminals, but as a healer and builder, promoting the reconciliation and reconstruction of that war-torn nation.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): It is indeed crucial and timely for the General Assembly to debate the situation in Afghanistan today, two days before the important step of inaugurating the Interim Authority. Needless to say, the establishment of the Interim Authority will be only the beginning of a long process of restoring peace in Afghanistan and ensuring the reconstruction of the country. Yet it is surely an important first step in the right direction.

The next steps for the establishment of a duly elected, legitimate Afghan government, through the process agreed upon in Bonn, will not be easy. Unprecedented in the history of this country long torn by war, this process will require painstaking effort, patience, tolerance and, indeed, a firm and shared commitment to peace on the part of the Afghan people. Ultimately, the key to the success of this process is the will of the Afghan people.

It is also evident, however, that cooperation and support from the international community will be equally important. Above all, given the abundant elements of uncertainty and unpredictability abundant in the local situation — particularly the absence of institutions to ensure domestic security — it is essential for the international community to help maintain security, at least in key areas, pending the establishment of a legitimate government. We therefore hope that the resolution currently under consideration in the Security Council for the deployment of an international security assistance force will be adopted and implemented swiftly.

Humanitarian assistance is another area in which Afghanistan now needs the support and cooperation of the international community. The Government of Japan, in response to the appeal made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has already pledged to provide up to $120 million for humanitarian assistance, and it will continue to actively support efforts in that area.

In this context, ensuring the safety of humanitarian personnel can never be over-emphasized; it is an important precondition for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and I would like to urge the Interim Administration to take every necessary measure in this regard.

The full cooperation of the international community will be indispensable for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. It is, indeed, the responsibility of the international community to help the Afghan people in their pursuit of the restoration and development of their own country. Moreover, we firmly believe that providing a clear prospect for the reconstruction of Afghanistan will help to strengthen the will of the Afghan people to pursue peace and political stability.

In recognition of this, in January the Japanese Government will host the ministerial meeting for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Building upon the results of a series of international conferences — from the Senior Officials Meeting on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, which the United States and Japan co-chaired in Washington in November, to the Afghanistan Support Group meeting in Berlin this month and the meeting of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Steering Group being held in Brussels today and tomorrow — the conference in Japan is expected to serve as an important opportunity for the international community to provide the Interim Authority and the people of Afghanistan with a hopeful prospect for reconstruction and development.

The draft resolution to be adopted today, of which Japan is a sponsor, is yet another testimony to the commitment of the international community to help ensure a better future for Afghanistan. It is therefore all the more important politically that the draft resolution be adopted by consensus.

In concluding, I would also like to propose that we ask the Secretary-General to convey the content of our discussion today, and the draft resolution that we are about to adopt, to Chairman Hamid Karzai of the Interim Administration, as a message of support from the international community to the Afghan people.

Mr. Pal (India): For some years now, the General Assembly has gone through the motions on this agenda item knowing that our words would fall on deaf ears in Kabul and Kandahar, from where the Taliban rode Afghanistan like an incubus. This year, though, we meet when it seems that the Afghans might be coming to the end of their long night, and their longer nightmare. But if the hope that glimmers now is not to be a false one, the international community, represented here, must accept that it has a duty to help Afghanistan back to peace, progress and prosperity.

At Bonn last month, the Afghans took the momentous first step towards rebuilding their country. Two days from now they will take the next, when the Interim Administration assumes charge, and the pace will then quicken. Journey's end will be a political system that is broad-based and multi-ethnic, and in which all groups will be equitably represented through free and fair elections. This will be a difficult journey. It will take courage and resolve to persevere but, fortunately, in all of Afghanistan's privations, these have never been in short supply.

The Afghans are trying to walk out of the valley of the shadow of death, and the international community must walk with them. But we should give them the help they need and ask for, not what we think is best for them. The Afghans have had enough of fatwas wished upon them by people who thought they had all the answers. Fatwas should not be replaced by fiats. So what should the international community do? Some broad principles would be worth bearing in mind.

We should listen carefully to what the Afghans want and respond to their needs. The best solutions will be home-grown, rooted in Afghan realities. Anything imposed will either be rejected or it will wither. We must use and foster local talent and capabilities. In Afghanistan even more than elsewhere, the only enduring solutions will be those that build on, and develop, local capacities. Afghan women must have an important role to play and a say in Afghan recovery. After the years of neglect they suffered under the Taliban, they will need special attention. There is no magic wand: Afghan recovery will take a very long time, and the international community must stay the course.

International support should be guided by a sense of duty and fellowship, not by the pursuit of narrow self-interest. It should be committed to the unity, sovereignty, territorial unity and independence of Afghanistan. There must be no interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. What Afghans need from their friends is intelligent service, not the attention of intelligence services.

Basing ourselves on these principles, India is ready to do what it can. We have pledged 1 million tons of wheat for Afghans in need, and are in touch with Governments and United Nations agencies, including the World Food Programme, to have this quickly delivered. In October we sent two consignments of medical relief supplies to Dushanbe for Afghan refugees. Tents, quilts, blankets, tea and food are on the way. As soon as Kabul was liberated we flew in a team of doctors with 5 tons of medicines to restart the Indira Gandhi Hospital for Women and Children. We are working to set up mobile hospitals and dispensaries, medical and health-care programmes for women and children and camps to fit artificial limbs. We have sent medical relief supplies and services to other parts of Afghanistan, including Mazar-e-Sharif, and similar assistance is being planned for Herat. We will be prepared to assist the demining effort.

The Prime Minister has announced a line of credit of $100 million for the reconstruction of the infrastructure and economy. Before 1979, Afghanistan was the largest partner in India's technical and economic cooperation programme. The areas covered included dam construction, agriculture, horticulture, hospitals and archaeology. We are ready to offer training and technical assistance appropriate to the needs of Afghanistan in a broad range of sectors.

After these decades of war, Afghanistan's needs are so enormous that they can be met only by a coordinated international response. It would be a pity if we duplicated efforts or if assistance from various sources were to cross purposes. To avoid this, and to make sure that what we do is best for Afghanistan, we should have, preferably under the aegis of the United Nations, an inclusive and transparent mechanism that, at the very least, collates and disseminates information on Afghan needs and the international response.

We are pleased that the Group of 21 has been revived. We have participated in its meetings and believe it has a most useful role to play. We have also associated ourselves with the international efforts to help Afghanistan. We were at Bonn, of course; and we

have taken part in the meetings held last month in Washington and Islamabad on Afghanistan's reconstruction. A team from India is in Brussels now for the follow-up meeting that is taking place there today and tomorrow. We will continue to remain engaged.

It goes without saying that emergency relief, long-term recovery and even Afghanistan's political evolution will depend very much on its being able to set aside the culture of the gun. This is, again, very much in the self-interest of all Afghans, and primarily their responsibility to bear.

In its resolution 1383 (2001) of 6 December 2001, the Security Council demonstrated its confidence in the Afghan groups by calling upon them to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers. The Interim Administration and the structures to follow will want peace in their land. The international community should do everything it can to strengthen their authority and help them rapidly establish an Afghan force. It should do nothing that would undermine the authority of the Interim Administration or that would make it appear powerless in the eyes of its citizens. That would invite further grief.

As the Interim Administration takes office in Kabul, we and all of Afghanistan's friends wish it every success. We would also like to offer a word of caution. All of us, and particularly those of us in Afghanistan's neighbourhood, want to see it stable, democratic and moderate, ruled by Governments that are elected by Afghans, represent their collective interests, protect their fundamental rights and promote economic and social development. Afghans will get this only if the alien and repressive creed that the Taliban represented is not allowed to creep back into governance. The Taliban claimed to represent the Pashtuns, but the foreign codes of behaviour they forced on Afghans were as opposed to pashtunwali, the code of the Pashtuns, as it is possible to be.

The Taliban are in disarray. They may have fled to their boot holes, but obituaries on them would be premature. The hatreds they nurtured, the sponsors who set them up and the missions that drove them have not gone away. They must not be allowed to creep back into governance wearing other masks or swearing new allegiances. The Taliban by any other name are, and must be, anathema.

Before I conclude, allow me to offer two words of thanks, both richly deserved. The first is to Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, who worked so hard to make the Bonn Agreement possible. We are delighted that he will now coordinate the United Nations work as it follows up on the Agreement. The second is to Germany, which hosted the intra-Afghan talks and which has for years shown its commitment to Afghanistan, in part in its piloting of this annual draft resolution, which we have joined in sponsoring.

Ms. Marcus (United States of America): The United States sincerely thanks the German delegation for its timely efforts on draft resolution A/56/L.62, on the situation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is at a crossroads today, on the eve of the inauguration of the interim authority. The United Nations has played an crucial role in working with the Afghan parties in Bonn on a political settlement, and we applaud the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and his colleagues in that regard. We also applaud the Afghans who gathered at Bonn for their courage in reaching an agreement which gives Afghanistan the hope of a better future. The establishment of the interim authority is the first step in a process that envisages the formation of a permanent broad-based, multi-ethnic Government that respects the rights of women and minorities. This process aims at ushering in a new era of peace and security in an Afghanistan free of terrorism and drugs and at peace with its neighbours.

We recognize the daunting challenges faced by the Afghan people in making that goal a reality. The United States and other members of the international community stand ready to support the Afghan people in their efforts to establish a new Government. We are fully committed to the critical tasks of humanitarian assistance and the long-term reconstruction of Afghanistan. The United States has pledged $320 million in humanitarian assistance and is working with international organizations, non-governmental organizations and neighbouring countries to meet the urgent needs of the Afghan people. In November, in Washington, we helped launch the reconstruction process that is intended to help Afghans make the transition from relief dependency to development. This week's meeting in Brussels will help prepare for the ministerial conference in Japan on the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The support of the international

community will be essential to rebuilding Afghanistan and providing for the urgent needs of its people.

Our assistance must also target the most disenfranchised of the Afghans — women and children — who have suffered greatly from Taliban oppression. Liberated from the yoke of the Taliban, women in Afghanistan must be reintegrated as full members of Afghan society and of the Afghan Government. The inclusion of two women in the interim authority was an important signal. With the draft resolution before us we call upon all Afghan groups to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of women, consistent with the commitments made at Bonn and with their international obligations.

In conclusion, let me add the voice of my delegation to those of other speakers this morning, affirming that the inauguration of the interim authority represents a historic opportunity for the people of Afghanistan. The United States and other members of the international community must help ensure the transition to peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his commitment and his personal involvement with respect to the issues related to Afghanistan. I wish also to pay special tribute to his Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for the outstanding work he has done.

Today we are addressing one of the most important issues on the agenda of the United Nations, the situation in Afghanistan, where for the past few months fundamental, crucial changes have been taking place with remarkable speed. In that regard, we cannot but mention the successful conclusion of the United Nations-sponsored talks on Afghanistan, held at Bonn. Ukraine welcomes the signing of the Bonn agreement, which was the first crucial step towards putting an end to the tragic conflict in Afghanistan. We are particularly pleased to point out the active role of the United Nations in the process. Indeed, the people of Afghanistan have an unprecedented opportunity to begin anew, and to build a State that will protect their rights, defend their interests and fulfil their aspirations. My delegation believes that this chance must not be missed — by Afghans or by the international community at large.

The Bonn agreement needs to be put into operation on the ground. Afghanistan will still face a grave humanitarian challenge and acute security problems that must be addressed by the Government and by the world community. Rebuilding the economy; establishing governing institutions; infrastructure; the issue of refugees; protecting human rights; establishing the rule of law; and maintaining peaceful relations with neighbours: these will be among the priority tasks of the transitional authority.

Global support is crucial for Afghanistan in that regard. Of course, the international community will need to make an enormous commitment, politically and financially, to the long-term stability of Afghanistan. Our efforts to assist Afghanistan will be effective only if they are well coordinated and if they become part of an overall political and economic strategy. We are convinced that the United Nations should play the central role in facilitating the transformation of Afghanistan into a secure and stable State.

As a traditional sponsor of draft resolutions on Afghanistan, Ukraine attaches great importance to the adoption today of draft resolution A/56/L.62, which was prepared by the delegation of Germany, a country which plays a special role in the Afghanistan peace process. The draft resolution, so lucidly introduced by Ambassador Hanns Schumacher, reflects in a comprehensive manner the international community's support for the goal of achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan. We reaffirm our willingness to work constructively, together with Afghans and with all interested States, in seeking to promote a peaceful political settlement of the conflict in that country on the basis of decisions taken by the Security Council and by the General Assembly.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): My delegation has already associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Union. In the light of Turkey's deep-rooted historical ties with Afghanistan, I would like to add the following remarks.

The interim administration in Afghanistan will assume its duties in two days' time. This will mark the beginning of a new era in the troubled recent history of Afghanistan. Indeed, the draft resolution that we are

about to adopt today represents a turning point in the history of the Afghan people.

Through this draft resolution, which addresses in a comprehensive manner the political and humanitarian issues facing Afghanistan, we will be able to display our solidarity with that long-suffering people and demonstrate our determination to assist it in these times of difficulty and hardship.

We view the agreements reached in Bonn as the first step towards the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan. The parties that have made this agreement possible should be commended. I would particularly stress the invaluable role played by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, and express our appreciation for his tireless efforts.

We expect the Bonn Agreement to serve as a basis for the termination of the great sufferings the Afghan people have gone through for the past 20 years. It is of paramount importance that the process of reconciliation in Afghanistan be an all-inclusive one, bringing together all of the ethnic groups in the country in a spirit of cooperation.

The destiny of Afghanistan need not be a bleak one. The international community has a role to play in this regard. Yet the main responsibility lies with the people of Afghanistan. It is therefore incumbent upon all groups in Afghanistan to set aside narrow interests once and for all, and focus at long last on the noble aim of building a stable homeland in which they can all coexist and prosper, in an atmosphere of harmony and peace.

Turkey has deep-rooted historical and cultural ties with the Afghan people, dating back to the 1920s. As a longstanding friend with no hidden agenda or special interest other than Afghanistan's stability and well-being, we have always been willing to assume an important role in efforts to secure the development of this friendly nation. Turkey's historical experience enables it to provide substantial support to the process of reconciliation and rehabilitation of the country, including the committing of troops to help ensure the necessary conditions for achieving a viable security environment.

We stand ready to augment our contribution to the rebuilding of Afghanistan as a politically united nation that enjoys friendly relations with all of its neighbours. As a country that has been holding regular consultations with all Afghan groups, we will continue our constructive efforts towards that end.

The Afghan people deserve to take their rightful place among the family of world nations as citizens of a respectable and stable State. In this process, it is incumbent upon the international community to respect and preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. Centrifugal tendencies would only serve to derail what is already a very delicate and sensitive process.

Today the country we call Afghanistan is in ruins. Human and natural resources are devastated. It is necessary to mobilize the international community urgently to extend a helping hand to alleviate this misery and to intensify the assistance efforts of the relevant United Nations offices and agencies in Afghanistan in helping to improve the living conditions of the Afghan people.

A vast number of internally displaced persons are living in an alarming state of deprivation and are in urgent need of basic assistance, including shelter, heat, food and medicine.

For our part, we are ready to contribute to international efforts aimed at alleviating their hardship. We have already undertaken numerous assistance programmes in order to provide health, educational and humanitarian help, as well as shelter, heat and electricity for displaced families.

Today the Afghan people need to rebuild their unity and harmony. The torments they have gone through can only strengthen their aspiration towards national reconciliation. We should all be ready to contribute to such an outcome. It is with this purpose in mind that Turkey is supporting and cosponsoring this draft resolution.

I would like to conclude by thanking the German delegation for its efficient cooperation in the formulation of this draft resolution, which will, no doubt, constitute an important step in the right direction.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (spoke in Spanish): My delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and detailed report he has submitted to us in document A/56/681.

Colombia emphatically condemned the acts of international terrorism that took place in September last and, accordingly, unequivocally joined in the Security Council's unanimous support of the military action that is currently taking place in Afghanistan.

Likewise, we acted decisively in that body, assuming specific responsibilities with respect to the only active sanctions regime against international terrorism as a threat to international peace and security, and in particular vis-à-vis resolutions 1267 (1999), 1333 (2000) and 1363 (2001) on the situation in Afghanistan, whose provisions were systematically ignored and violated by the former Taliban regime.

We are aware the United Nations is facing a challenge of unprecedented proportions. The decisions we have taken in the Security Council and those that will be taken on Afghanistan — both in the Council and in the Assembly — will represents the first steps on a path towards an as yet unknown end. The basic objectives will have to be the establishment of peace and the reconstruction of the country.

In order to achieve this, we must continue to take effective decisions that will contribute to a definitive solution to the situation in Afghanistan, in particular with respect to humanitarian issues and to development needs.

Having said that, sustainable peace, reconciliation, reconstruction and development cannot take root in conditions of impunity. In this respect, the Afghan people and the international community must commit themselves to addressing the problems of the past, ensuring that responsibility is taken for the abuses committed, including violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law.

I should like to commend the determined efforts of the international coalition and of the Afghan people to remove the Taliban regime from power and to dismantle the terrorist organizations that were given support and safe haven by that regime.

We are convinced that the greatest responsibility for finding a peaceful solution rests ultimately with the Afghan people themselves. That is why we would like to highlight the agreement reached between Afghanistan's various ethnic and political groups in Bonn on 5 December last. Under this agreement, an Interim Authority was established that will be in place for an interim six-month period, following which an emergency loya jirga will be convened.

We hope that the transitional administration will generate its own capacity to respect and ensure respect for human rights, to meet the needs of the Afghan people, to contribute to peace and to regional and international stability and to eradicate from its territory any links to international terrorism and activities related to the illicit drug trade. Only a political agreement based on the establishment of a broad-based, multi-ethnic and truly representative Government — one that respects human rights and Afghanistan's international obligations and is committed to domestic peace and especially to peace with its neighbours — can effectively lead to lasting peace and national reconciliation.

We also wish to reiterate our hope that the transitional solution will continue to be based on ongoing and flexible dialogue that, as far as possible, involves all Afghan society. Likewise, we hope that these characteristics will be maintained with regard to regional actors and the rest of the international community. This practice is the guarantee for maintaining the legitimacy, coherence and soundness of the decisions to be adopted by this Assembly and the Security Council. That is why there is no doubt that the United Nations should continue playing a central and impartial role in the international efforts towards a settlement of the Afghan conflict.

My delegation is concerned about the enormous humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan arising out of the chronic poverty, hunger, war, breakdown of public order, drought, internal displacement, refugees and abuse of the civilian population that have been particularly prevalent in that country's recent history. Of deep concern are the figures presented by the Secretary-General in his report: over 6 million people are vulnerable and in urgent need of assistance, while the safety and well-being of over 1 million internally displaced persons are precarious.

The work being undertaken by the United Nations system through the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme is essential in addressing this grave situation. It is also important, however, for the international community to focus its efforts on good governance; food security and sustainable ways of living; the provision of basic social services; and the

reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, despite the many obstacles.

Furthermore, we deem it important to ensure the full, equitable and effective participation of women in cultural, economic, political and social life and in the decision-making process at all levels of the State. We therefore urge the various Afghan groups to protect and promote the equal rights of men and women, especially in the areas of education, work and health care and benefits.

We wish expressly to recognize those Governments of the region that have assumed the responsibility of offering humanitarian assistance to thousands of Afghan refugees who have had to flee their homes in order to survive the war. We also express our appreciation to the humanitarian workers, particularly those of the United Nations, who have made tremendous sacrifices in bringing valuable assistance to mitigate the harmful humanitarian consequences of the actions and omissions of the Taliban regime, domestically and outside Afghanistan.

Likewise, we appreciate the contributions of the United Nations system, all Member States and international and non-governmental organizations, which have responded positively and continue to respond with humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. The challenge to the United Nations requires us to accelerate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Afghans, which means helping them along the path towards the construction of a stable and united country after more than 20 years of war. We appeal to the donor community to continue sharing the responsibility of overcoming the serious humanitarian and economic crisis in that country.

My delegation also offers its full support for the Bonn agreement of 5 December and congratulates Ambassador Brahimi for having effectively concluded the process with that agreement.

I conclude by expressing my delegation's support for the consensus adoption of the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, which reflects the concerns of the international community and offers the greatest possible support to the efforts of the United Nations and Afghanistan to promote peace in that country. Furthermore, the adoption of the draft resolution will be an excellent opportunity to send a message of solidarity and support to the transitional administration that will assume its functions in Afghanistan on Saturday, pursuant to the Bonn agreement.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): When we speak of Afghanistan, we do so with a sense of déjà vu. For decades now, we have spoken on Afghanistan within this hallowed Hall. We have adopted resolutions and focused our attention on that country, but the focus was only momentary. The sense of urgency evaporated when the immediate concerns were removed and the land and the people were left in the lurch. We are all aware of the horrendous consequences that followed.

Today, once again we turn our attention to that country now that the realization has dawned on us that we ignored it at our own peril. It became the breeding ground of terrorism, the haven of unreason. The Taliban-Al Qaeda nexus was the bleakest era in Afghan history. By now, hopefully, much of these evils have been eliminated. The world was united towards that goal.

Bangladesh sits on the Security Council and is deeply involved in the deliberations on Afghanistan. We will support the draft resolution shortly to be adopted there. We pay tributes to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, for bringing together the parties and setting them on the path to peace. We congratulate the interim administration headed by Mr. Hamid Karzai, which is about to assume office and responsibilities in Kabul. We urge all groups to abjure intramural rivalries and to cooperate with the global community in an endeavour that can only result in their good.

We are now on the threshold of deploying an international security assistance force with wide participation. We commend the United Kingdom, France and others that have taken initiative in this and shown leadership.

Beyond that, there may be a need for a sustained United Nations-sanctioned peacekeeping presence. Overtly humanitarian operations, such as demining, must begin as soon as possible. Most importantly, we are now looking towards the phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction in Afghanistan. We thank all the donors that have come forward in its support. The United States, Japan, the European Union and Norway, among others, deserve a special mention in this regard. We should extend every cooperation to the United Nations Development Programme and Mr. Mark Malloch

Brown, its Administrator, in their responsibilities in this sphere.

Bangladesh may have many and varied constraints, but as a vibrant, pluralist community of 130 million, it is also one of the largest democracies in the world. Through indigenously evolved ideas of microcredit and non-formal education, we have brought about among us a societal transformation, including the empowerment of women. These experiences are relevant to Afghanistan. Bangladesh, as a regional country, is prepared to share them with our Afghan brethren. We believe there must be a South-South dimension to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Sharing of best practices in a comparable milieu is not only helpful but essential.

The 4 million refugees must return soon. It will be better still if they are able to do so before the loya jirga is elected, so that they can take part in the decision-making process and thereby be mainstreamed.

The empowerment of women is crucial to Afghanistan's future. This cannot be achieved by diktat, but only by providing them access to the means to play an economic role. This is also where Bangladesh's experience in microcredit and non-formal education would be relevant. The increasing social role of women will help make human rights a central focus. Hopefully, it will also help create a gentler, more tolerant society.

The great game in Afghanistan — the relentless jockeying for power by all actors — must come to a close. It has caused one of the greatest tragedies of our times. Let us bring down the curtain on this sad drama. Let us also herald the beginning of a new dawn for Afghanistan and its people. The draft resolution that we have cosponsored will further the achievement of this goal. We applaud Germany's role in bringing it to fruition.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada): We would like to thank the Mission of Germany for its coordination of this resolution. The resolution provides needed guidance from the General Assembly on the evolving political, security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

Canada views the impending inauguration of the Interim Administration in Afghanistan as a crucial first step towards a decent future for the suffering Afghani people. This is the first real opportunity for a sustainable and lasting peace in a country that has known only strife and misery for the past 20 years. Above all, the Afghan leaders are to be commended for their decision to reach this potentially historic agreement and for taking this courageous step towards a better life for their people.

(*spoke in French*)

We would like to thank the Special Representative, Mr. Brahimi, and his team for the key role that they played in the talks Bonn. We will continue to rely on his wise counsel during the reconciliation, reconstruction and long-term development process in Afghanistan. We hope that the United Nations will continue to respond coherently to the challenges posed to us by Afghanistan. To ensure a joint and effective strategy, all of the United Nations sectors, including policy, security, rights of the individual, humanitarian and development sectors, must be fully coordinated.

(*spoke in English*)

There can be no question that the Interim Administration will require considerable support from the international community. Canada is committed to working with the Administration to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance and to support the transition to democratic governance. Any future Government should, in our view, represent the broad spectrum of Afghans and ensure the full and equal participation of women in the new governing process. The job ahead for Afghanistan requires the talents of all of its people, men and women together.

We expect the new authority to ensure full respect for Afghanistan's obligations under international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law. Stability in Afghanistan is crucial to the overall effort to combat terrorism. We are encouraged by the recent successes of the military campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan. At the same time, we are very concerned by the continued insecurity throughout the country, the lawlessness and reprisals. The deployment of an international stabilization force will make a very important contribution towards a stable political transition in Afghanistan.

As many who have spoken before me have already noted, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan was already dire prior to the events of 11 September. We remain concerned about the safety of

Afghan civilians, and we call on all parties to ensure their access to protection and assistance. We applaud the efforts of the United Nations, the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations in continuing to meet the needs of vulnerable Afghans throughout the recent crisis, and we note in particular the courage and dedication of local Afghan staff. We will continue to emphasize the importance of building and supporting Afghan civil society.

Canada has provided significant humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan over the past 10 years, including substantial aid in response to the current crisis. We remain committed to providing humanitarian assistance, and we will participate actively in the reconstruction process. We are very pleased with the humanitarian response of the United Nations to date. The Organization demonstrated important leadership in preparing timely and credible contingency plans. This must continue, particularly for the transition from relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction. We note the continuing relevance of the coordination structures in place in Afghanistan for humanitarian and development assistance, and we would encourage their full utilization, including by the Afghan Support Group. We look forward to the outcome of the consultations currently under way in Brussels among the Afghan Reconstruction Steering Group and the forthcoming donor conference in Tokyo.

The recent return of Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries reflects the optimism that many Afghans share about their country's future. We recognize and appreciate the burden that neighbouring countries have shouldered over the past 20 years in meeting the needs of displaced Afghans. We encourage countries hosting Afghan refugees to continue to provide protection to those in need and to cooperate fully with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in facilitating their safe return and voluntary repatriation once conditions in Afghanistan permit.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): The tragic events of 11 September have stunned humanity and exposed the brutality of terrorism. They have brought together a broad coalition of nations in a concerted fight against it. This coalition could prove to be a watershed in international relations, underlining the imperative for nations to work collectively to address common challenges. Nepal has supported the measures taken to stamp out the scourge of global terrorism.

The war against global terror, led by the United States, has made remarkable progress. The repressive and obscurantist Taliban regime in Afghanistan has collapsed; Al-Qaeda has been decimated and its leaders are on the run; and terrorist networks, communication channels and financing have been severely disrupted. The Bonn talks succeeded in paving the way for an Interim Administration. For the first time in more than two decades, the people of Afghanistan can heave a sigh of relief and put war and cares behind them. The Afghan people can now hope for a peaceful future, and the international community for a decline in international terrorism and improved security.

Challenges, however, remain. Al Qaeda is down, but not out yet. There are many other terrorist organizations wreaking havoc in different parts of the world. They need to be taken out if we are to remove the menace of terrorism from the face of the earth. The need to reduce poverty, illiteracy and disease and to promote sustainable development and justice remains as urgent as ever if we are to make sure that terrorists never again find an opportunity to exploit the vulnerabilities of the deprived and dispossessed in an attempt to advance their evil designs.

As the war on terror winds down in Afghanistan, the international community's attention must now be focused on helping the interim Government in Afghanistan to safeguard and consolidate peace and stability and to mount a massive humanitarian support campaign. We welcome the international community's initiative to embark on a multinational force for peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, and Nepal will be more than happy to contribute peacekeepers to achieve peace and stability in a fellow South Asian country.

The next urgent priority for Afghanistan and for the international community must be to usher in the democracy and development that the poor and repressed Afghans so desperately need. It is absolutely essential to prevent that hapless country from reverting to bad times, as well as to foster a peaceful, prosperous and just society in Afghanistan.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like at the outset to express my sincere gratitude to the delegation of Germany for having done such a fine job in preparing the draft resolution now before us. For many years, Germany has spared no effort in working to normalize the situation in Afghanistan and

to coordinate our work here at the United Nations on that issue.

The draft resolution objectively describes the situation and takes into account the interests of Afghanistan. Its provisions will certainly be conducive to the formation of a broad-based, legitimate Government, which in the final analysis, will make it possible to achieve stability in Afghanistan and lead to the establishment of normal, good-neighbourly relations with neighbouring countries, in keeping with the norms of international law.

Uzbekistan supports the Agreement that was reached at the Conference in Bonn, held under the auspices of the United Nations, with regard to the settlement of affairs in Afghanistan, and we endorse the formation of the Interim Authority, headed by Mr. Karzai. We believe that that Agreement is a first step towards the peaceful settlement of the situation, leading to a compromise solution among the various parties and to the development, on that basis, of stable state institutions in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan, as an immediate neighbour of Afghanistan, has a deep understanding of the grief and sorrow that has been inflicted on the long-suffering Afghan people. For over 20 years there has been conflict in Afghanistan, and generations have grown up knowing nothing but bloodshed. Because of the many years of war, there has been considerable mistrust among the various parties representing different ethnic and territorial groups.

Given all of those factors, which have a negative influence on the situation in the country, a number of difficulties remain that represent obstacles to the achievement of peace. It is essential to achieve peace in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is, of course, in favour of the rapid restoration of stability to that country, and we are sparing no effort in contributing to the humanitarian assistance that the Afghan people so desperately need. Almost 6,000 tons of humanitarian assistance has been delivered to Afghanistan recently through the territory of my country, from both United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

In November, the bridge over the Amu Darya River was reopened, enabling representatives of the United Nations and other international organizations to deliver relief supplies, thus taking a further step towards alleviating the dire situation of the Afghan people.

The enormous arsenals of weapons and various types of ammunition that were stockpiled in the territory of Afghanistan during the war years is a very serious issue that might not only complicate the situation and make it more acute, but also, perhaps, lead to the creation of new hotbeds of tension. According to experts, there are millions of light weapons, as well as heavy artillery and other arms, in Afghanistan. We are, of course, deeply concerned about the fact that such weapons are still in the hands of various unregulated militias. A considerable number of weapons also remain in the hands of the civilian population. It is important to recognize that this enormous collection of weapons could be used by hostile parties in an attempt to resolve their inter-ethnic, religious and other differences. Unfortunately, that possibility cannot be ruled out at present.

Any armed conflict or confrontation in Afghanistan could lead to the re-escalation of the war and could, of course, increase tension and instability in the region as a whole. We are convinced that the gradual process of achieving stability and peace in Afghanistan should go hand in hand with the resolution of problems relating to the enormous build-up of weapons still to be found in Afghanistan as a result of the decades of war. We believe that the various specialized agencies within the United Nations system have a crucial role in this respect and that the Security Council has an essential part to play in resolving the issue of eliminating the stockpiles of arms and weaponry in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan supports the draft resolution before us, and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that, in order to allow time for the Fifth Committee to review the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/56/L.62, action on the draft resolution is postponed.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.